

**PHILOSOPHY OF FIP
PROGRAM****FIP**

The department goal is to assist families towards self-sufficiency. Self sufficiency is best accomplished by:

- Adults being employed,
- Securing court-ordered child support for each child where appropriate,
- Providing life skills training for those needing it including minor and teen parents, and
- Ensuring that all children have access to medical care.

As families become self-sufficient, we will meet the legal mandates such as work participation rates, reducing subsequent out of wed-lock pregnancies, ensuring that teens are completing secondary education, and ensuring that minor parents are living in appropriate settings.

Role of the FIS

The Family Independence Specialist (FIS) uses a Strength Based Solution Focused Approach and will:

- Identify goals with the client and develop plans for self-sufficiency, expressed in the client's own words, when possible. This will occur through the interactive solution focused process. When setting goals with the client, keep in mind that the goals should be clear, simple, specific, measurable, realistic, positive and important to the client. The client must see a role in these goals for himself in order to change concrete behavior. Monitor progress toward meeting the goals identified in the Family Self Sufficiency Plan (FSSP).
- Modify or add to the plan, when there is a change in circumstances; or upon discovery of a challenge or concern.
- Determine eligibility for financial and medical programs.
- Identify and or authorize support services to help families carry out their plan.

- Provide direct services such as counseling and problem solving when needed. This is especially helpful for clients who are in noncompliance.
- Identify resources and initiate referrals for community services, including employment and training, and domestic violence counseling.
- Explore options and authorize child care.

As a professional case manager, you will focus on building a trusting relationship with families through the use of the solution-focused interviewing skills. This is best accomplished at a home call. Building trust requires accepting clients for who they are, and understanding they are key in identifying their own needs and strengths in moving toward self-sufficiency. You will help clients discover their needs and build on their strengths, recognizing that open and frequent communication is necessary to build the family's trust.

Use all available means in facilitating communications and trust. This includes home calls, meeting clients in convenient locations, meeting with clients at training sites, etc. Such contact and communication will enable you to work more effectively developing and monitoring plans/contracts while reducing negative consequences. However, consequences will be used to reinforce the concept that clients are responsible for their own lives. Whenever possible, discretion has been left to staff to work with families. Discretion includes the frequency and types of contact beyond mandatory client contacts.

As the relationship with the client begins to build, the client may begin to disclose other barriers to self-sufficiency, such as domestic violence. The Department of Human Services believes all individuals have a right to be safe from violence. We know domestic violence is a critical issue for many people. Victims of domestic violence need services that enhance their safety and self-sufficiency.

If there is a disclosure of domestic violence, and the client is not receiving services, the FIS is required to refer the family to the appropriate community services. Determine if domestic violence presents a barrier to cooperation with agency requirements, such as pursuit of child support (BEM 255), participation in employment and training activities (BEM 230A), and third party liability (BEM 257).

HOME CALLS

Making home calls is an expected activity for FIS.

Home calls provide the best opportunity to interact with a family in their daily living environment. Visiting a family in their home is very effective in helping you understand its frame of reference. Home calls help establish a trusting relationship as the family usually feels more comfortable in their own home. Building a trusting relationship will open the door to an increased level of participation and willingness to discuss the family concerns.

While in the home, you can celebrate successes and identify challenges the family faces. Review and monitor the FSSP goals and activities and help the clients make a plan for removing any obstacles they perceive.

Topics for Discussion

When visiting a family in their home, there are numerous topics for you to discuss, such as:

- The successes each adult has had since the previous contact e.g., a plan for employment and, if they are employed, what progress have they made toward a raise, promotion, increased hours, or the results of any evaluations? This discussion will also give you an opportunity to make sure the correct earned income is reflected in benefit budgets.
- Any concerns or challenges that have come up which slowed down or hindered the family's movement to self-sufficiency. To meet those challenges a plan should be developed. The family should be complimented on any successes they had in dealing with the challenges or concerns. If a challenge or concern continues to exist, discuss and create a plan using the Solution Focused Approach to help the family meet these challenges.
- Interview to bring out goals that the adults have for themselves which they believe will lead to self-sufficiency, what steps they need to take to achieve these goals, and how confident and motivated they are in achieving these goals (scaling questions).
- Involve the family in a discussion of the children and the importance of education. Ask the adult and the children, if present, how each child is doing in school, what their interests

are and what extra-curricular activities they are participating in. Together with the family, talk about resources or opportunities for the children in their areas of interest.

This discussion will provide an opportunity for you to provide positive feedback and compliments. It will increase participation and involve the entire family in the plan to support each other. Inform them of the Tuition Incentive Program and other educational opportunities that are available for children to attend college if applicable.

- Ask what personal and community resources they know of that may be available to help the family remove their challenges and concerns, meet their goals, and move toward self-sufficiency. If the client doesn't know about the community, help them develop a plan that will teach them to find these resources.
- Discuss child care arrangements that the parent has made for care of the children while the parent is employed, child care arrangements during school breaks, and back-up plans for child care if the provider is ill or otherwise unable to care for the children.
- Explain the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit and how receiving this credit throughout the year can increase monthly income. Help them find out how to apply for the credit.
- Discuss how to access the advanced education and training opportunities that are available for persons meeting the participation requirements.
- Discuss support services that are available while persons are participating in employment-related activities.
- Discuss the children and their adjustment to having the parent employed or otherwise out of the home and participating in employment-related activities.
- The children and their relationship to a stepparent or other adult living in the home can also be a topic of discussion and planning with the parent.
- Let clients know there are family and/or community support groups that are available in cases of emergencies.

For ineligible grantee cases, the focus of the home call should be a discussion about the children and resources that may be available to the family and/or the ineligible grantee, for example, support groups that are available to grandparents who are raising grandchildren.

In absent parent situations, discuss the importance of parenting time and the involvement of both parents in a child's life. Discuss the relationship between the absent parent and child. Include steps in the plan to make it better. This discussion is also important for ineligible grantee cases. Does the child visit the parent? Are there custody issues? Is the relative interested in securing guardianship of the child, if appropriate?

In all home calls, including ineligible grantee situations, be alert to key indicators that signal problems in the home which may indicate a need for Preventive Services or require intervention by Protective Services. Be alert to situations of domestic violence, substance abuse by any family member, and behavioral problems of children or conflicts between family members.

Ask for the client's explanation of events but if you believe that the home environment requires Preventive or Protective Services involvement, a referral must be made.

While visiting in the home you can also complete redeterminations, verify eligibility factors and clarify circumstances. Be alert to any changes in circumstances that may affect eligibility and explore them with the family. The family may have verification available in the home that you can view and document during the home call. If you plan to complete an eligibility redetermination during a home call, allow extra time so that you will have sufficient time for discussing independence activities and family issues.

Notify Client of Home Call

Send a letter five days before the planned home call notifying the client that you are going to make a home call. You may use form DHS-2442, "Notice of Employment Related Appointment/Assignment or Home Call" or the DHS-2444, "Notice of Employment Related Noncompliance" if the home call is for purposes related to employment-related noncompliance. (See BEM 233A). The letter must include at least the following information:

- The date and approximate time of the visit.

- The purpose (example: to develop and monitor the FSSP), and
- A provision allowing the client to reschedule or change the location.

Note: The purpose of the home call before closing due to noncompliance is to find out why the client has not complied with work requirements and to help the client solve any problems that make participation difficult. Include the WF case manager in the process, as appropriate.

Schedule home calls during normal working hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday) unless the client requests another time to avoid a work schedule or other conflict. Managerial approval is needed whenever a home call is made outside of normal working hours, in order to arrange scheduling changes for that pay period.

Safety Practices

A home call must be done jointly with another person in the following situations:

- When the FIP case will be closed at the end of the month for noncompliance with employment-related activities or child support.
- When the family receiving FIP is also an active Protective Services case and the CPS worker believes that a second person should accompany the FIS.
- When there is a history of assaultive or violent behavior by a family member or a family member has mental health problems and is known or suspected to be violent to others.
- Any other home visit where case record documentation indicates a potential threat to staff safety.

An exception to the joint home call can be granted only with documented supervisory approval.

The second person on the home visit may be another FIS, a CPS worker, other DHS staff or staff from another agency.

Completing Home Calls

A home call is a face-to-face contact between the recipient and a representative of the department in the recipient's home (or other

location of the client's choice). A home call expectation is also considered to be met if:

- The letter scheduling the home call was sent five days in advance and
- The client did not call to reschedule, and
- The client was not home when the department representative arrived or the representative was otherwise unable to engage the client in a face-to-face contact when at the home.

Home calls are **not** a condition of eligibility but they are a very important part of case management. Some clients may initially be reluctant to have a home call, especially if they do not understand the purpose. If a client seems reluctant to have you visit the home, explain via telephone, mail, or an in-office visit the purpose and the advantages of the home visit such as observing family strengths, convenience to the family, and a more relaxed atmosphere to discuss plans and the progress the family is making.

Note: Coordinate home calls between Children's Services, Teen Contractors and FIS if Children's Services or Teen Contractors are actively working with the client. Home calls made by Children's Services or Teen Contractors fulfill the FIP home call expectation if they work on the plan or contract.

FREQUENCY OF HOME CALLS

FIP

While home calls are the preferred method of in-person contact, local office resources may limit the capability. Alternate methods of in-person contact include local office appointment or a location mutually agreed upon by the client and specialist. Offer in-person contact in the following situations:

- Before closing FIP for the client's refusal to participate with employment-related requirements. See BEM 233A, "Home Calls/Client Contacts".
- Before closing FIP for failure to cooperate with Child Support; see BEM 255, Department Policy.